



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES
BUCHAREST • ROMANIA

August 2011



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American Citizen Services eNewsletter

Social Security Administration: Mandatory Electronic Payments

Thank you to those of you who were able to make it to the meeting with the representatives of the Social Security Administration that recently visited Bucharest to provide beneficiaries of SSA, VA and OPM residing in Romania with the latest information about upcoming changes and payment options.



As you learned during the meeting, the U.S. Treasury Department has mandated no more paper federal benefits checks **by March 1, 2013**. By March 1, 2013, all federal benefits will be paid electronically and all beneficiaries will have to switch from paper checks to electronic payment. The Embassy and the Regional Federal Benefits Unit have advocated for direct deposit of benefits in bank accounts in Romania (*country direct deposit*), but the negotiations between the U.S. bank where the payment originates and a Romanian partner bank are still ongoing and there is no definite answer of when or if the negotiations will be completed.

While still hopeful that country direct deposit will be offered in the future, the Regional Federal Benefits Office introduced the most recent electronic payment option, a low cost prepaid debit card from Chase/JP Morgan Bank, now available to beneficiaries residing in Romania. Because this is a prepaid debit card that is not linked to a bank account, you can enroll in this program and have your benefits deposited on the card monthly without having to open an account with a bank. Benefits of the Chase Direct Deposit Card include:

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All **non-emergency** ACS services (renewal of U.S. passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, notariats, etc.) are provided by appointment **ONLY**.

Please follow [this link](#) to make an appointment with the consular section staff.

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

Address: St. Filipescu 26, Bucharest

E-mail: acsbucharest@state.gov

Tel: +40- 21- 200 3300

Fax: +40- 21- 200 3578

In the event of an emergency involving an American citizen, please, call +40-21-200-3433

For information about public hours, please visit <http://romania.usembassy.gov/acs/index.html>.



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- *Immediate access to your funds that is convenient and safe: the card has a PIN number and your money will be available on the card the next day after payment is made (the date when payment is made is usually the 3rd of the month);*
- *No credit check or bank account needed to qualify, enrollment by request;*
- *Protection against lost or stolen cards or unauthorized purchases (providing that you protect your PIN number and you are not at fault for the unauthorized transactions);*
- *Card access anywhere Visa debit cards are accepted;*
- *Ability to pay bills and make purchases using the card;*
- *Access to withdraw cash from ATMs and teller;*
- *Online tracking of balances, purchases, withdrawals and deposits to help manage your money.*

We encourage you to consider this option if you are accustomed to making payments by card, or if you would like to have immediate access to your pension on a set date, at the beginning of the month, and not have to wait for a check in the mail.

If you choose the Chase direct debit card now and wish to renounce later, you may do so. The bank is waiving the account fee for the first three months while you try the card. The enrollment process takes approximately two weeks on the average.

We have forwarded you information from the Chase/ JP Morgan Bank concerning the enrollment and card fees by mail. As you know, although this is a dollar card, Romanian ATMs will only disburse local currency at the bank's exchange rate. If you wish to withdraw dollars, you may go to the bank teller window (cashier) with your card and ID. You can also use the card to pay for purchases at local stores. The transaction will be made at the bank exchange rate and just like cash withdrawals from the ATM, a foreign exchange fee will be charged to your card. There may also be local ATM surcharges, so you might want to check with your local banks if they charge a fee for cash withdrawals at their ATM or bank teller.

More than 80 beneficiaries have already signed up for Chase direct debit card. If you find that this option is suitable for you, please, contact us about enrollment at ACSBucharest@state.gov.



Smart Traveler, the official State Department app for U.S. travelers, invites you to see the world with easy access to frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, U.S. embassy locations, and more.





CHANGES TO FILING I-130 PETITIONS OVERSEAS



Effective August 15, 2011, petitioners residing overseas will no longer be able to routinely file Forms I-130, *Petitions for Alien Relative*, with U.S. Embassies and Consulates except in locations where U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has a public counter presence within the Embassy or Consulate. Petitioners residing overseas in countries where USCIS does not have a public counter presence will be required, starting August 15, 2011, to file their Forms I-130 by mail with the USCIS Chicago lockbox. U.S. Embassies and Consulates that do not have a USCIS presence will only be able to accept and process Forms I-130 in exceptional circumstances (www.uscis.gov).

Forms I-130 that were properly filed at an Embassy or Consulate overseas where USCIS does not have a presence before August 15, 2011, will not be affected by this change.



Please contact us (VisasBucharest@state.gov) for more details regarding the changes in the process.



Internet Dating and Romance Scams

United States citizens should be alert to attempts of fraud by persons claiming to live outside of the U.S., professing friendship, romantic interest, and /or marriage intentions over the Internet.

Typically, once a connection is made, the correspondent asks the U.S. citizen to send money or credit card information for living expenses, travel expenses, or "visa costs". Sometimes, the correspondent notifies the American citizen that a close family member, usually the mother, is in desperate need of surgery and begins to request monetary assistance. Scams have even advanced to the point where the U.S. citizen is informed of a serious or fatal accident to the correspondent and the "family" asks for money to cover hospital or funeral costs. Several citizens report losing thousands of dollars through such scams.

The anonymity of the Internet means that the U.S. citizen cannot be sure of the real name, age, marital status, nationality, or even gender of the correspondent. In every case reported to the embassy (at least 10 cases only this year), the correspondent turned out to be a fictitious persona created only to lure the U.S. citizen into sending money.

These scammers have created male as well as female characters and entice same sex correspondents as well as those of the opposite sex. A disturbing recent twist are scammers who have connected to U.S. citizens through chat rooms for HIV positive individuals, posed as HIV positive individuals themselves, and asked for money for treatment or travel to the United States.

Correspondents who quickly move to professions of romantic interest or discussion of intimate matters are likely inventions of scammers. A request for funds almost always marks a fraudulent correspondent.

U.S. citizens are cautioned against sending any money to persons they have not actually met.

For more information regarding this subject, please visit the following website - http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/financial_scams/financial_scams_4554.html



WE REMIND YOU...

...that ALL non-emergency American Citizen Services (renewal of U.S. passports, Consular Reports of Birth Abroad, and Notarials) are provided by appointment **ONLY**. Links to the online appointment system are provided under the appropriate service category on the [Embassy website](#).



...that the Embassy is MOVING SOON!

We encourage you to visit [our website](#) regularly to make sure that you know our moving dates and new address. Stay in touch!

... that we continue to hear from Romanian citizens who have received fraudulent e-mail from people claiming to be affiliated with the U.S. Department of State and its **Diversity Visa (DV) program**. These messages congratulate the recipient for winning the DV lottery, and instruct him or her to send payment for the visa fees to a U.S. Embassy or via Western Union. **Please help us to spread the word around.** Make sure that your Romanian friends and contacts know that these messages do not originate from the U.S. Government, and are part of a scam. We suggest that you break off all contact with the sender of the email, and by no means should you send money.



The U.S. government does not notify DV winners *by email*. If your friends or contacts entered the Diversity Visa Lottery, they can check their status by visiting <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> starting July 15, 2011. They will need the *confirmation information* they received when they entered the lottery to check status. This is the only way to confirm whether they are a winner. If they have lost their confirmation information, they will not be able to check their DV entry status. We will not be able to resend the confirmation page information to them.

If any of your friends or contacts received a *letter, email or phone call* informing them that they are a DV Lottery winner, let them know that it is not from the U.S. government. **No other organization or company is authorized by the U.S. Department of State to notify DV applicants of their winning entry, or of the next steps in the visa process.** Entrants will never be asked to send money by mail or Western Union at any point in the application process.

If your friends or contacts have any questions, they should contact VisasBucharest@state.gov at any time.

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Important

The Embassy will be closed on September 5, 9, 12 and 13, October 10, November 11, November 24 and December 1 in observance of U.S. and Romanian official holidays and for administrative reasons.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How can I change my name on my

Social Security Card?

To change your name on your social security card, you must show us documents of your identity, legal name change and citizenship.

To prove your **legal name change**, one of the following documents may be provided:

- Amended or corrected birth certificate;
- Marriage certificate;
- Divorce certificate;
- Certificate of Naturalization showing a new name; **or**
- Court order for a name change.

To prove your **identity**, one of the following documents may be provided:

- U.S. passport;
- U.S. passport card;
- U.S. driver's license;
- State-issued non-driver's identification card.

To prove your **U.S. citizenship**, one of the following documents may be accepted:

- U.S. passport;
- U.S. passport card;
- U.S. birth certificate;
- U.S. consular report of birth abroad;
- Certificate of Naturalization; **or**
- Citizenship Certificate.

We will request that you complete the SSA form [SS-5](#). We will forward the form along with all supporting documentation to the *SSA Regional office in Athens* for further processing. Your new social security card will be mailed to you directly.

As always, if you have any questions, please, email us at ACSBucharest@state.gov.